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ABSTRACT

Carl Jung's theory of type states that much seemingly chance variation in human behavior results, not from chance, but from basic differences in human functioning. This theory is divided into two major components: fundamental human attitudes (extroversion, introversion) and basic mental processes (sensation, intuition, thinking, feeling). Sensation and intuition represent functions of perception while thinking and feeling are functions of judgment. Personality is structured by four preferences concerning the use of perception and judgment: extroversion or introversion, sensing or intuition, thinking or feeling, perception or judgment. It is these personality preferences that comprise the conceptual framework of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), a psychological instrument which measures variations in normal attitudes and behaviors. The MBTI can be a valuable marriage counseling tool. After having a couple take the MBTI, the counselor who interprets the results to them should be aware of their personality types and should realize that individuals will perceive and judge data differently. Once the MBTI results are presented, it is important to initiate plans for the couple on how this new information will impact their lives. Couples who have commitment to change can facilitate the change process by having an appreciation of the other person's type. The MBTI can be a useful tool for explaining their types to them. (NRB)

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# Marriage Counseling Using Differing Personality Types as a Resource

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## Abstract

The authors outline the basic personality theory of C. G. Jung and the adaptation of that theory by Katherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers. The psychological instrument that grew out of their research was the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) and its personality approach is briefly summarized. The MBTI is proposed as an adjunct to marriage counseling. The use of the MBTI as a marriage counseling tool is explained and examples are given.

## Carl Jung's Influence on the Development of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a psychological instrument which measures variations in normal attitudes and behaviors. The questionnaire was developed by Katherine Briggs and her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers, based on the theories of Swiss analytic psychologist Carl Jung. The MBTI was first published in 1962, and subsequently revised in 1970, and in 1976.

The purpose of the MBTI is to incorporate Jung's theory of type. Briefly, the theory is that much seemingly chance variation in human behavior is not due to chance; it is in fact the logical result of a few basic, observable differences in human functioning (Myers & Myers, 1980). These basic differences concern the way people prefer to use their minds and specifically the way they perceive and the way they make judgments.

"Perception" is defined by Jung as the process of becoming aware of things, people, ideas, and occurrences in the environment, while "judgment" is defined as the processes used to derive conclusions about one's perceptions (McCaulley, 1981). Together, perception and judgment, which make up a large portion of people's total mental activity, govern much of their outward behavior, because perception-by-definition is an index of what people see in their environment. Thus, it is reasonable to contend that variations in perception and judgment should result in corresponding differences in behavior.

If you adopt this working hypothesis, the MBTI aims to ascertain, from a self-report questionnaire, people's basic preferences in regard to perception and judgment, so that the effects of the preferences and their combinations may be established by research and put to practical use (Myers, [1962] 1975, p. 1).

The history of the MBTI began early in this century when Katherine C. Briggs first became interested in personality differences and developed her own typology from biographies (Myers & Myers, 1980). It was not until Jung's book, Psychological Types, was published, that Briggs realized that Jung's theory of type was analogous to her own, but only more complete. She then studied his typology thoroughly and incorporated it into her own. She taught the theory to her daughter, Isabel Briggs Myers. For over twenty years, Briggs and Myers adopted Jung's theory of type and did some informal "type-watching" which helped them gain more insight into making behavior more understandable and predictable (McCaulley, 1981).

After World War I, Isabel Myers decided to create a psychological instrument that would bring Jung's theory into practical application. The suffering and tragedy of the war stirred her desire to help people understand differences in personality types and avoid destructive conflicts. Years later, after making slight modifications and elaborations of Jung's type theory, Myers developed the psychometric questionnaire that she

christened the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The following decades saw a steady growth of research with the MBTI. In 1975, the Consulting Psychologist Press concluded that the accumulated research on the MBTI now justified distribution of the instrument for professional application; accordingly, it published Form F in 1975 and Form G in 1977 (McCaulley, 1981).

Jung's theory of personality types has had an undeniable influence on the development of the conceptual framework of the MBTI. A description of the factors underpinning his type theory are noteworthy at this point.

Jung's theory is divided into two major components: fundamental human attitudes and basic mental processes or functions. Extroversion and introversion are referred to as the fundamental human attitudes or orientations of personality. In the extroverted attitude, attention seems to flow outward towards others and objects in our environment, conversely in the introverted attitude, energy seems to flow inward and is consolidated within one's own position (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). To a certain extent, everyone possesses a portion of these two attitudes. However, extroverted types of people habitually adopt the extroverted attitude and consequently ingrain characteristics of the attitude into their own personality types. These people tend to be very sociable, outspoken, communicative, and are often impulsive and action oriented. Conversely, an introverted personality tends to be interested in the inner world of concepts and ideas.

In conjunction with the fundamental human attitudes, Jung also postulated 4 basic mental processes or functions: sensation (S), intuition (N), thinking (T), and feeling (F)--which represent the individual's orientation to consciousness and are referred to as orienting functions (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). Jung defined a function as a form of psychic energy that remains stable under varying conditions (McCaulley, 1981). The former two functions, sensation and intuition, describe the two modes of perception, and the latter two functions, thinking and feeling, describe the two modes of judgment.

Jung denotes the two perceptual functions as "irrational" functions, because they are beyond reason, are attuned to the flux of events, and operate most broadly when not constrained by rational direction (McCaulley, 1981). "Sensing" refers to how one perceives his environment through his senses. Persons who adopt a sensing perception typically develop acute powers of observation, a memory for facts and detail, and an enjoyment for the pleasures of the here and now. "Intuition" is defined as the perception of possibilities, meanings, and relationships via insight. Intuitive people are attuned to future possibilities, often creative ones, and enjoy the play of the imagination.

Thinking and feeling in Jung's view, are the two basic modes of decision-making. Unlike the perceptual functions, these decision-making functions are considered the "rational" functions (McCaulley, 1981). "Thinking" is a rational function that links

ideas together by means of concepts, making logical connections. People who are oriented toward life primarily through thinking develop strong powers of analysis, skepticism, and are interested in the relationship between events at different points in time. "Feeling" is the function that arranges the contents of consciousness according to their values. People who live their lives according to their feelings tend to be sensitive to what matters most to others, develop a need for affiliation, and a desire for the preservation of past values.

The two perceptual modes are completely independent of the two judgment modes. Either kind of judgment can team up with either kind of perception, thus 4 combinations occur: (ST), (SF), (NF), NT). Each of these combinations produces a different personality with its own unique set of traits. Those people with similar combinations may tend to be more amiable towards each other because their perceptions and judgments about things are congruent. Whereas, those with different combinations may tend to have a hard time understanding each other because their perceptions and judgments about things may be different.

Although a person has some level of each of the four functions within their total personality makeup, they are not all equally developed. Usually, one of the four functions has taken over precedence and is more highly ingrained into the personality. Jung refers to this highly differentiated function as the dominant or superior function (Hall & Lindzey, 1970). One

of the other three functions acts in a subordinate capacity to the superior function and is called the auxiliary function (Myers & Myers, 1980). The auxiliary function takes over if the dominant function becomes inoperative.

Under the theory presented here, personality is structured by 4 preferences concerning the use of perception and judgment: (EI), extroversion or introversion; (SN), sensing or intuition; (TF), thinking or feeling; (JP), judgment or perception. It is these personality preferences then, which Jung developed, that comprise the conceptual framework of the preference inventory created by Isabel Briggs.

Marriage Counseling Using the MBTI

The MBTI only takes twenty to thirty minutes to complete, and hand scoring by the marriage counselor can be accomplished in five to ten minutes. With as little as thirty to forty minutes of time invested, a marriage counselor has available a very valuable tool in assisting a couple to more fully understand and appreciate how the other partner in a marriage operates in the world. The MBTI and its theory can be quickly explained to a couple in fifteen to twenty minutes, and additional readings can be assigned as homework, or more complete discussions of the MBTI can be scheduled for future sessions. But, within the first or second session, the MBTI can be fully utilized as a marriage counseling tool.

David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates (1978) state that difference in types between couples is an interesting phenomena. It is the opposite trait that attracts us to another individual yet after we have established a relationship as, for example, in marriage, we have a tendency to take out our creative sculpturing behavior and proceed to attempt to change the other person into a person "like me." The paradox of this behavior is that the more we do change the other person to be "like me" the more we are prone to reject the other person and find them "unattractive," and perhaps boring.

After having the couple take the MBTI the results are interpreted to them. When interpreting the results it seems imperative that a couple of cautions urged by Isabel Briggs Myers be observed: 1) the indicated types are preferences and do not connote wrong/right type of categories; 2) that each individual should learn to respect his/her own preferences as indicated by the title of her book, "Gifts Differing" (1980). She urges that each person respect his/her own type, in fact she called it being "psychologically patriotic".

While interpreting the results to a couple it could be helpful for the counselor to be aware of the personality types of the individuals. Individuals will perceive and judge data differently, therefore, the method of presentation could influence the reception of the results. Also the counselor could share with the couple present how different presentations could

have skewed the results and they could possibly experience the difference. For example, a person with a high ST is typically bored with a lot of theory and reference to theory, whereas a high NF may thoroughly enjoy the same.

After the results are presented, it is helpful to allow some time for the concepts to be challenged, interpreted and integrated into the couple's intellectual processes. Sometimes it is also helpful to ask the couple to give specific examples from their own experiences of how the information they have just received could have benefitted them earlier in times of conflict, or how it helps them to understand their own individual reactions to each other. Not infrequently there is a "sigh of relief" that they are normal. That what they had interpreted as abnormal behavior, rejection and sometimes hostility was just a function of their particular preference of behavior.

After the MBTI is presented it is important to initiate plans for each of the marriage dyad on how this new information and awareness is going to impact their lives. One specific example might help: a feeling person's emotions are different from a thinking person's emotions. Each person may experience the same intensity of feeling but the manner in which it is dealt with or the manner in which it is expressed are truly different. A feeling person may need to "experience" the fact of the other person's love at least one time per day. If it is not experienced, the person may actually interpret this absence of

the expression of love as rejection, lack of love or indifference. None of which may be true. The thinking person may have told the feeling person three years ago that he/she loved him/her and does not understand why it is important to tell the person again "so soon." "If my feelings would have changed, I would have told you!" In fact the thinking person may experience some irritation from the feeling person who is "demanding" so much attention. How is each one going to integrate this information into his/her own life and how are they going to accommodate for each other's difference? This is where the marriage counselor can facilitate a couple's renewed growth.

When the couple begins to integrate the new information into their individual behavior patterns and also begin to have a new appreciation and understanding the other's behavior patterns, there seems to be a renewed spirit of cooperation, commitment and respect for each other. It can happen, for example, that the introverted person can begin to share process and not just product with the other person. This usually is received with appreciation by the partner, especially if the person is extroverted, and gives the relationship a renewed spirit of commitment and cooperation. The downward, negative circle which had been functioning before is now reframed into a positive upward circle of cooperation, commitment and trust. Each individual begins to appreciate the other person's type. There is a real understanding and acceptance of the difference that is

present between them. Along with this understanding and acceptance can be a real commitment to accommodate and maybe even change one's self in order to "get along" better with the other.

Maybe a few examples might assist. A person with an introverted type tends to only share product and not process, i.e., the person will share only after the matter has been processed internally. The introvert is prone to only share after it has been processed internally by him/herself. The extrovert on the other hand tends to share any thought or desire and seems to have a steady stream of consciousness. This can produce conflict because each one tends to project his/her own type on the other. So when an extrovert comes home and announces that he/she has looked at a new car (usually meaning nothing more than I've looked), an introvert who receives this message could panic, because when an introvert typically shares this idea, it means that he/she has thought about, analyzed it and has decided to buy it.

Also when a person with a high T and another with a high F interact, there is potential conflict as mentioned earlier. The T person must learn to address the feelings of the F person first before anything else is said. "You really are angry right now." If the feelings aren't addressed the person with the F type will typically <u>feel</u> unheard, not listened to, unappreciated and sometimes put down or alienated. But by addressing the feelings the person with the F type will feel heard, appreciated and listened to.

Although these authors do not believe that this instrument is the answer to all marital conflicts, they do believe that it gives the counselor another tool with which the counselor may address the problem, give the couple some understanding and techniques on how to cope with their problems and hopefully reduce the stress of the relationship so that a more enjoyable, loving and productive relationship may result. There has to be a commitment to change, and a true appreciation for the other person's type can facilitate the process. It is almost impossible to alter one's self to "get along" with another if you do not understand how that other person operates in the world.

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